

THESIS AND DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS

Theological Seminary, Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies

"A Comparative Study on the Understanding of Christian Perfection in John Wesley and Ellen G. White"

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Advisor: Woodrow Whidden, Ph.D.

Christian perfection has become a serious issue in Christianity. John Wesley and Ellen G. White were dominant figures in their denominations, who explained Christian perfection through their work. This study tries to find the similarities and the differences among Wesley's and White's teachings on Christian perfection, specifically on their definitions of the term, its standards, and its attainment. In order to achieve this it first seeks to define both Wesley's and White's concepts of perfection, analyze them, and then, undertake the comparison.

Chapters 2 and 3 explain John Wesley's and Ellen G. White's understanding of Christian perfection. The chapters start by picturing their historical-theological backgrounds and exposing their early Christian experiences. Finally, the chapters describe their teachings on Christian perfection and explain their definitions, standards, and attainments of perfection.

Chapter 4 compares both Wesley's and White's teachings on Christian perfection. Both believed that perfection contains justification and sanctification. There are major similarities in their definitions of the term, its standards, and its attainment. However, there are also some distinctive dissimilarities between them, such as instantaneous perfection, perfection of the soul, perfection in the time of trouble, and perfection as eternal growing and learning process. Chapter 5 summarizes the results and findings of each chapter and concludes the study with pertinent concluding remarks.

"The Interpretation of the Concept of *Hadēs* Described in Luke 16:19–31—The Rich Man And Lazarus—in the Light of the Historical-Grammatical Method"

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Biblical scholars and theologians propose divergent interpretations of the

concept of ᾗδης in Luke 16:19–31. In view of the existing lack of consensus regarding the meaning of the term the dissertation seeks to discover a plausible interpretation of the concept of ᾗδης in this narrative that is contextually and theologically possible. It does so by using the historical-grammatical method in order to suggest an interpretation of the concept of ᾗδης that may reflect primarily Jesus' intent, and secondarily Luke's.

The analysis of the genre of Luke 16:19–31, considering the OT *ἡψῆ*, NT *παράβολή*, and the passage itself, indicates that the story of the rich man and Lazarus—like other OT and narrative parables—is fictitious and as a parable stresses a spiritual truth.

The study of the background of the concept of ᾗδης in the Ancient Near East, Greek literature, Intertestamental Rabbinic literature, and early Church Fathers shows that ᾗδης is the abode of souls in the intermediate state. However, both OT and NT biblical literature suggests that ᾗδης may only mean “death,” both physical and spiritual, as well as “grave,” the abode of the dead—below the earth. There are no indications that souls are conscious in ᾗδης, except in this parable.

The structural-thematic analysis of Luke in general, and Luke 16:1–31 in particular, suggests that Jesus' and Luke's emphasis is not on the concept of ᾗδης. Caring for the poor of the community is one of Luke's structural-thematic focal points. In this sense, the use/abuse of wealth is the key theme of Luke 16:1–31.

The exegetical analysis of the narrative shows that ᾗδης in Luke–Acts and in the Synoptic Gospels may mean “death, grave, pit, abode of the dead”—below the earth. Its synonym *γέεννα* refers to the place of punishment of the wicked after the *Parousia*. In the literary analysis, the story serves as a parable used by Jesus to emphasize the perpetuity of the Law and the Prophets as the rule of life in the era of the kingdom of God, which began with the coming of the Messiah Jesus Christ. Jesus does not teach the doctrine of the punishment or reward of the dead in the intermediate state in using the parable. The eschatology of the Synoptic gospels, and the rest of the NT does not warrant such doctrine.

The study provides an extensive exegetical analysis using the Historical-Grammatical method. Specifically, the genre analysis and the structural-thematic analysis may contribute methodologically in the interpretation of the parables of Jesus.

"The Making of a Church: Ellen G. White's Views on Church Government 1844-1888"

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Advisor: Aecio E. Cairus, Ph.D.

Even though Ellen G. White is not usually seen as a theologian there is no doubt that she plays an important role in the understanding of Adventism. Two current issues regarding her writings need to be addressed. The first relates to her understanding of the doctrine of the church during the development of the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist church. The second attempts to find how and in what sense her understanding of the church affected church organization in Adventist history. This study approaches the subject using a historical-descriptive methodology and is divided into four major chapters.

The introduction suggests that no specific study of the role that Ellen G. White played during the early years of the denomination in guiding the process of its organization exists. Chapter 2 shows how immediately after the disappointment of October 1844, Ellen G. White began to introduce order among the troubled band of ex-Millerites.

Chapter 3 focuses on the challenges that the lack of a formal organization and fanaticism brought to Sabbath-keepers in the early years of the movement. It shows how Ellen G. White appealed to early Adventists to support their leaders, to remain united on issues of doctrine, to make wise use of their resources to preach the gospel, to keep themselves as a holy people, and to carefully scrutinize the qualifications of those willing to serve as ministers of the gospel.

Chapter 4 assesses the role Ellen G. White played in the circumstances that led early Adventists on the road to formal organization. This chapter also highlights her appeals to the authority of the church. Chapter 5 describes and analyzes the period from 1863 to 1888, during which Ellen G. White's appeals for church order were forcefully presented to the leaders of the church as never before. She advocated that: (1) mission had to be the driving force of any organizational structure among Seventh-day Adventists; (2) centralism in the activities of the church was not according to divine order; (3) ministers are to submit their individual independence and to support those whom God has chosen to lead the church; (4) leaders of the church are not called to rule or lord over the church; (5) fault finding among church leaders weakens the church as a whole; and (6) union on matters of doctrine is indispensable for the church.

This study concludes that the development of Seventh-day Adventist organization is pervaded by the influence of Ellen G. White. It shows that,

through her prophetic authority, she was able to advocate ecclesiological principles which gave direction and a unique missionary identity to the Seventh-day Adventist Church at that time. Her role set the basis for some order-fostering practices among Seventh-day Adventists which have remained up to the present time.

"The Role of the Watchman in the Context of Judgment and Restoration: An Exegetical Study of Ezek 3:16–21 and 33:1–11"

Researcher: Ronald George Sikilea Stone, Ph.D. in Religion, 2008

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Most studies dealing with Ezek 3:16–21 and 33:1–11 focus more on the originality of the two passages rather than the content, which deals with the watchman. In contrast, this study investigates the role of the watchman in the context of judgment and restoration based on these two passages. To facilitate this, the historical-grammatical method of exegesis is employed.

Chapter 1 deals with the introductory issues, definition of the watchman, and the review of literature. In understanding the concept of the watchman, the Hebrew term צֹפֵה "watchman" which is used also in the context of Ezekiel is the preferred word for this study. This is because it presents the watchman as a person who is "looking out" rather than שֹׁמֵר "watchman" whose task is mainly to "look in." צֹפֵה "watchman" is also more intensive than שֹׁמֵר. Resulting from the review of literature six characteristics of the role of the watchman can be seen: (1) he is watching for danger or an enemy; (2) often connected to prophetic ministry; (3) focuses on the nation of Israel; (4) can be linked to the Messiah; (5) sounds an alarm as a trumpet; and (6) is waiting on the LORD.

Chapter 2 deals with the exegetical study of Ezek 3:16–21, with special emphasis on the role of the watchman. Here, the primary meaning for the Hebrew root זָהַר "warn" is to "teach," showing that the role of the watchman is not only to warn but also to teach. Interestingly, the presence of causal clauses indicated by the prepositional markers (כִּי and כִּי "because, on account of, for") reveal that the reason for the death of the wicked and the righteous who turn away from YHWH is based on the account of their sins and is not due to the failure of the watchman to perform his duty. Further, the expression וְדַמּוֹ מִיָּדְךָ אֶבְקַשׁ "but his blood, I will require from your hand" is a "synecdoche of species." This means that the watchman is treated as a murderer. This phrase is also used in legal terminology based on the law of retribution or equivalency. The purpose of this is to discourage the watchman from being unfaithful to his responsibility.

The exegetical investigation of Ezek 33:1–11 in chapter 3 reveals the purpose of warning, namely, that the people might turn and live. It also affirms the consistency and fairness of YHWH, in that YHWH does not hold anyone responsible for someone else's sin.